

## Statement on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report

May 7, 2000

Today the FBI released new 1999 statistics showing that crime is down for an unprecedented eighth year in a row, continuing the longest decline on record. The decline in crime has reached Americans living in communities of every size and in every region across the country. Data from the 1999 FBI Uniform Crime Report show that overall crime fell 7 percent, with crime down in every category of offense. Violent crime dropped 7 percent, including an 8 percent drop in murder, and property crime fell an additional 7 percent. In 1999 there were over 8,000 fewer murders than in 1992.

This good news confirms that our anticrime strategy—more police officers on the beat, fewer illegal guns and violent criminals on the street—is having a powerful impact. We know we can turn the tide on crime, because we have. But despite this success, we cannot let up on our efforts. Gunfire continues to claim the lives of nearly 12 children every day, and we need to work on every front to reduce gun violence. With Mother's Day approaching, I will continue to urge the Congress to put the interests of America's families over those of the gun lobby and pass commonsense gun safety measures to keep guns out of the wrong hands. Together, we can make America the safest big country on Earth.

NOTE: This statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 5 but was embargoed for release until 6:01 p.m. on May 7. It was also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Million Mom March Organizers and an Exchange With Reporters

May 8, 2000

**The President.** Hello, everybody. I just finished a meeting with Attorney General Reno and Secretary Shalala and Chief of Staff Podesta, and I have met with all these folks, these women and their men supporters

who are the organizers of the Million Mom March. They're going to be here and in over 60 other cities on Mother's Day, marching for commonsense gun safety legislation, asking Congress to act, building on the grassroots efforts that have brought success in the petition drive in Colorado and the Legislatures of Maryland, Massachusetts, and California.

And I think what they're doing is profoundly important. We in the administration want to do whatever we can to support them. They are taking a stand for their children. Many of them have lost loved ones. They have lost children. They have lost spouses. And there will be many more just like them who are here.

They want Congress to act on the commonsense gun legislation before it, and of course, they want Congress to go beyond that to licensing, registration. They have not proposed taking away anybody's gun. They have proposed making life a lot safer for the American people and their children. And I think what they're doing is a very noble and good thing. I hope it will prompt Congress to act.

It is unconscionable—it is now over a year after Columbine and over 10 months since they've had a chance to pass this legislation. And I hope their presence here will—and throughout the country—will be successful. I am quite sure they will succeed over the long run if they stay with it, because they represent the heavy majority of the American people, and they have borne a heavy burden in their own lives which they have been willing to put into this effort. And I'm very grateful to them.

## Gun Safety Legislation

**Q.** What's stopping Congress from acting, at least pressure from the moms——

**The President.** Well, we'll see if this makes a difference. I think that the people in the gun lobby have historically been very effective. But I think that if you look at the specifics of the legislation before Congress, there's a huge majority of the American people for it. And I think what all these folks are going to remind them of on Mother's Day is that they're watching, and they want action.

And this is not an issue that can be dealt with in business as usual and buried for the—[inaudible]—interest groups. It needs to be resolved, and I hope it will be. And if it does, it will be far more because of them than because of us. The only way we can pass this is if people have to look into the eyes of parents who have lost their loved ones, if they have to look into the eyes of people who have lost their spouses, their brothers, their sisters, and answer why don't we have this common-sense safety legislation; why is this the only area of our national life where we don't have prevention as our primary strategy?

They won't be able to answer that. You can't talk to these folks that have been talking to us this morning and answer that.

#### ***Death of John Cardinal O'Connor***

**Q.** Mr. President, you're going to the funeral of Cardinal O'Connor today. Can you give us some thoughts this morning on his impact on America and religious life, and what his passing might mean for the future?

**The President.** Well, I'm going because he was a leader of the Catholics and the biggest Catholic diocese in the country and because, in particular, he was a devoted chaplain in the armed services. And I feel particularly grateful for that. And of course, it will be up to the Church and to the Pope to decide his replacement and what happens after that. But I think he played a very large role in the life of the Church. Even when he was controversial and when he disagreed with me, I liked the fact that he was outspoken, and he stood up for what he believed in.

#### ***Israeli Interim Framework Agreement***

**Q.** Mr. President, the Israeli Foreign Minister said today that the Gaza is so big that it's clear that there's not going to be an interim framework agreement. Are you disappointed by that?

**The President.** I just disagree with it. I think there will be a framework agreement.

**Q.** By the deadline, sir?

**The President.** Well, maybe not by the deadline. But they thought they might trip the deadline a little. But I think we'll get an agreement, an overall agreement by September. And I think they'll get there. There

are substantial gaps, but if they want to do it bad enough, they'll do it.

#### ***Situation in Zimbabwe***

**Q.** Mr. President, can you comment on the situation in Zimbabwe with the farmers and squatters there?

**The President.** Well, I've got Ambassador Holbrooke over there now working on a lot of the troubles in Africa, including the situation in Zimbabwe, and I hope it can be worked out in a lawful manner. And I think it's quite sad what's going on because it's a very important country, and it's very important to South Africa and South Africa's future, as well as to the future of the people who live in Zimbabwe. And I hope we can get them—we can do something that will encourage them to return to a progressive and stable path. They're working at it.

#### ***Situation in Sierra Leone***

**Q.** How about Sierra Leone?

**The President.** We're working now on what can be done to restore the vigor of the U.N. peacekeeping mission there and make it work. It's very important. I spent a lot of time on that the last 4 or 5 days, and we're working on it.

#### ***Gun Safety Legislation***

**Q.** You seem very subdued. Do you have a cold?

**The President.** No. I'm just—if you had been here talking to these people about all their children's lives and all that, you'd feel subdued, too. I mean, I just—I feel very sad that I haven't been able to get this legislation voted on. I think this is a really big deal.

We've gotten—yesterday we got the crime statistics—crime down 8 years in a row, murder at a 30-year low. But it's still one of the most dangerous countries in the world, only because we have stubbornly refused to take prevention seriously when it comes to guns, to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children. And we've had the crime rate come down 8 years in a row, so we now know we can turn the crime rate around. And the next big barrier to bring it way down and make this a really, really safe country is to take these commonsense preventative measures.

And yes, I am subdued. I'm frustrated, and I'm very sad because I don't want any more kids to die. And I want them to come here on Mother's Day, and I told them before you came in here that if they didn't get tired, they'd win this fight. I've been watching these kinds of issues all my life, and it's like civil rights or something where there's this huge organized resistance. But if they just keep at it, they're going to win.

I think they should have won more already, and I'm going to do what I can to help them.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs David Levi of Israel; and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Richard C. Holbrooke. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Message to the Congress Transmitting the District of Columbia Courts' Budget Request**

*May 8, 2000*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

In accordance with the District of Columbia Code, as amended, I am transmitting the FY 2001 Budget Request of the District of Columbia Courts.

The District of Columbia Courts have submitted a FY 2001 budget request for \$104.5 million for operating expenses, \$18.3 million for capital improvements to courthouse facilities, and \$41.8 for Defender Services in the District of Columbia Courts. My FY 2001 budget includes recommended funding levels of \$98.0 million for operations, \$5.0 million for capital improvements, and \$38.4 million for Defender Services. My transmittal of the District of Columbia Courts' budget request does not represent an endorsement of its contents.

This transmittal also includes information on grants and reimbursements forwarded by the Courts in response to the request in Conference Report H. Rept. 106-479.

I look forward to working with the Congress throughout the FY 2001 appropriation process.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
May 8, 2000.

### **Remarks at a Reception for Representative Baron P. Hill in Bethesda, Maryland**

*May 8, 2000*

Thank you. Well, I want to thank, first of all, Joe and Anne, for having us in their beautiful home on this beautiful spring night. And I want to thank Baron's colleagues Charlie Stenholm from Texas and Stenny Hoyer from Maryland for coming. They represent, I think, the future of the Democratic Party and where we have to go, and they've proved that you can get elected in places where sometimes we don't get elected. I also want to thank your predecessor, Lee Hamilton, for being here. He's one of the greatest House Members in my lifetime, and I thank him for what he is doing. And I want to thank, in his absence, Senator Bayh.

Evan met me at the door, and he said Susan was out of town, and he had two choices: He could stay and hear me give this speech, or he could go home and tuck his kids in bed. And I said, "You've heard the speech"—[laughter]—"and you'll never regret a minute you stay with your children." My daughter is about to be a senior in college, and I can still remember all the nights I tucked her in bed, and she can remember anything she ever did that I missed. [Laughter] Even though she can count them on one hand and have fingers left over, at 20 years old she can still remember. So he went home, as he should have. And since he's not here, I won't be embarrassing him when I tell you that I hope and expect some day I'll be voting for Evan Bayh for President of the United States.

I want to say just a few things, and I won't keep you long. I want to get out and say hello to the people I haven't seen yet. The country is in good shape, and I'm grateful for that.